

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6014

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 5893

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, PE

SUBJECT: AREQUIPA QUIET BUT THREAT OF LABOR UNREST CONTINUES

REF: LIMA 5828

SUMMARY: AREQUIPA IS CALM FOLLOWING 48-HOUR PROTEST STRIKE WHICH PARALYZED CITY AND LED TO CIVIL DISTURBANCES. BOTH PRESS AND STRIKE LEADERS BLAME APRA ALONG WITH FAR LEFT FOR ATTEMPT TO FOMENT STRIFE. SOCIAL TENSION, HOWEVER, WAS CLEARLY A RESULT OF GENERAL STRIKE LED BY MOSCOW-LINE CGTP, ANOTHER OF WHICH IS CALLED FOR JULY 22 IN CUZCO. AREQUIPA WALKOUT SEEN BY SOME AS THINLY DISGUISED WARNING OF WIDESPREAD LABOR UNREST IF ANTI-COMMUNIST TENDENCIES OF GOP MODERATES NOT RESTRAINED. END SUMMARY.

1. SECOND DAY OF CGTP-LED 48-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE IN AREQUIPA PASSED PEACEFULLY UNDER GOVERNMENT-DECLARED STATE OF EMERGENCY. ON SATURDAY WORKERS RETURNED TO ROUTINE LABORS. ALL UNION LEADERS RELEASED AND CGTP UNION HELD ASSEMBLY DENOUNCING "INFLITRATORS, PSEUDO-LEFT AND THE APRA WHO COMMITTED ACTS OF PROVOCATION IN ORDER TO DISTORT MEANING OF OUR STRUGGLE AND TO CREATE CONFLICT BETWEEN STRIKERS AND POLICE". UNION CURIOUSLY TERMED "FAVORABLE" THE SOLUTION PROPOSED JULY 16 BY GOP MINISTERIAL COMMISSION. UNION HAD BEEN
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PRESENTED WITH PROPOSAL BEFORE INITIATING STRIKE, YET DECIDED TO

STRIKE ALL THE SAME. CGTP DESCRIBED THE STATE OF EMERGENCY AS AN OVERREACTION BUT CALLED ON RANK AND FILE TO COOPERATE WITH GOP IN OBSERVANCE OF IT.

2. THE GOP CONTINUED ITS CONDEMNATION OF AREQUIPA AGITATORS. AIR MINISTER GILARDI TOLD PRESS OVER WEEKEND THAT "LABOR EFFERVESCENCE" IN AREQUIPA WAS "A CONSEQUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL AGITATORS WHO ARE UNCEASING IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO CREATE DISORDER". GOP DIALY LA CRONICA EDITORIALIZED THAT AREQUIPA DISORDERS WERE "COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY EFFORT TO USE ECONOMIC DEMANDS OF SOME WORKERS AS MEANS TO PRECIPITATE POLITICAL CRISIS". FAR LEFT AND APRA WERE SPECIFICALLY ACCUSED OF EFFORT TO DESTABLIZE THE GOVERNMENT JUST AS THE DATE APPROACHES FOR PRESIDENT VELASCO'S IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE.ACCORDING TO LA CRONICA, THE "TACTIC IS A CLEAR ATTEMPT TO CREATE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CRISES, TO DISTRACT ATTENTION, AND TO CONSUME GOP ENERGIES IN LABOR NEGOTIATIONS SO AS TO POSTPONE IMPORTANT DECISIONS."

3. JULY 19 PRESS NOTED THAT STATE OF EMERGENCY, IN ADDITION TO AREQUIPA, HAD BEEN EXTENDED TO TACNA, PUNO AND MOQUEGUA DEPARTMENTS. GOP DID NOT HINT OF TROUBLE OUTSIDE OF AREQUIPA BUT ONLY REFERRED TO THESE DEPARTMENTS AS FORMING PART OF THE SOUTHERN NATIONAL SECURITY ZONE ALONG WITH AREQUIPA.

4. THE CGTP DEPARTMENT FEDERATION INCUZCO HAS NOW CALLED FOR 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE IN CUZCO ON JULY 22. STRIKE IS TO BE INTER ALIA A DEMONSTRATION OF SUPPORT FOR PETOLEUM WORKERS IN THE REGION, SOME OF WHOM ARE AFFECTED BY A RARE TROPICAL DISEASE -- UTA OR WHITE LEPROSY. UNION DEMANDS 500,000 SOL INDEMNITY FOR EACH EFFECTED WORKER. THE CUZCO FEDERATION ALSO CALLED FOR AN INVESTIGATION

OF THE U.S. FIRM GEOPHYSICAL SERVICE INTERCONTINENTAL (SUB-CONTRACTOR TO U.S. OIL COMPANIES) TO DETERMINE " THE LEVEL OF CORRUP-TION IN VIOLATION OF PERUVIAN LAWS". IN ADDITION, CGPT DEMANDS REPLACEMENT OF LABOR MINISTRY, SINAMOS AND INTERIOR MINISTRY OFFICIALS

IN CUZCO.EMBASSY HAS BEEN NOTIFIED THAT THE PORT OF ILO IS ALSO THREATENED WITH IMMINENT STRIKE ACTION, IN SPITE OF STATE OF EMERGENCY IN MOQUEGUA DEPARTMENT.

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5. COMMENT: ATTEMPT OF STRIKE LEADERS AND PRESS TO FIX BLAME FOR LABOR AGITATION AND CONSEQUENT DISORDERS ON THE APRA AND FAR LEFT IS NOT CONVINCING. AIR MINISTER GILARDI ACCUSED NO GROUP SPECIFICALLY BUT CALLED LABOR DIFFICULTIES THE FRUIT OF COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY AGITATION. THESE DIFFICULTIES ARE IN FACT DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO CGTP LEADERS WHO, IN SPITE OF BELATEDLY CONCLUDING THAT GOP MEDIATION EFFORTS WERE FAVORABLE, CARRIED OUT THEIR PROTEST STRIKE.

6. ALTHOUGH OFFICIAL GOP COMMUNIQUE DO NOT REFLECT BASIC CAUSE OF AREQUIPA TENSION (UNION DEMANDS), THERE SEEMS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS INCREASINGLY TROUBLED BY DIRECT COMMUNIST UNION CHALLENGE TO GOP ECONOMIC POLICIES. BEYOND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS, THE ARQUIPA STRIKE HAS BEEN JUDGED BY SOME OBSERVERS (INCLUDING A SOVIET JOURNALIST) AS A THINLY DISGUISED WARNING TO GOP MODERATES THAT ANTI-COMMUNIST POLICIES WILL RESULT IN A WAVE OF LABOR UNREST FOR WHICH AREQUIPA IS ONLY A DRESS REHEARSAL.
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